

Selected Articles from *The Individual* June 1998

Since 2002, each new issue of the SIF's journal, *The Individual*, has been uploaded onto the SIF's website at www.individualist.org.uk as a PDF file. Before that, online availability was very limited.

To remedy this, we have reconstructed back-issues of the journal using only the core articles. We hope that you will find them of interest. Any comments should be directed to the current editor of *The Individual* at editor@individualist.org.uk.

Please note that views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the SIF but are printed as a contribution to debate.

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THE EDUCATIONAL CRISIS IN THIS COUNTRY

Amber Astron

A 'crisis' is an extreme situation with potentially hazardous consequences. It may also be viewed as a time of enforced change. Here, it is proposed that our 'educational crisis' has been brought about by tension between the 'philosophical aims' and the 'sociological functions' of education, and that this tension may be either heightened or diffused by the political and economic context in which education takes place.

How is education defined?

Educational planning can be developed from three distinct perspectives: the first is knowledge based emphasising 'content'; the second is attainment based emphasising 'product'; and the third focusses on the pupils and their development 'process'; (the 'what, why and how' of education). In the following discussion the above will be realigned under the headings of 'philosophical aims' and 'sociological functions' of education.

In this country two models of philosophical thought have been dominant during this century; the Traditional Classical model, and the Progressive Romantic model.

The Traditional Classical model has its foundation in Plato's Republic. Knowledge is seen as absolute. The presupposition is that knowledge passed down through the ages, which has stood the test of time, has some objective truth inherent in it. This high-status view of knowledge implies that it is superior to, and more readily transferable than, knowledge gained through direct experience.

In Plato's Republic, its people were stratified into distinct social classes. The bronze and iron were the lower social orders (farmers and workers), the gold and silver were the ruling elite, Guardians and Auxiliaries. The Guardians were judged morally and intellectually superior, and allowed access to knowledge denied to the other social groups. Plato upheld the view that social reproduction (a sociological function) was necessary for social stability.

The following notions are therefore implicit in the traditional classical model of education: 1) judgements are made as to the value of knowledge - high status knowledge is seen as absolute and justifiably imposed; 2) access to high status knowledge is highly selective and may be viewed as elitist; 3) the needs of society are seen as more important than those of the individual.

The Progressive Romantic philosophical model, differs from the traditional classical view in that it concerns itself primarily with the growth and development of the individual, and knowledge is seen as evolutionary. This philosophy has its roots in the ideals of Rousseau, Locke, and Dewey.

Although this model does not structure knowledge into absolute forms, it has made a natural partnership with the develop-

mental psychology theories of Piaget. He constructed four hierarchical stages of cognitive development, and knowledge is constructed in a hierarchical form intrinsic to the child who is viewed as an active learner. The teacher is seen as a facilitator of knowledge.

These two philosophical models, the Traditional Classical and the Progressive Romantic, may be seen as being in direct contrast with each other.

Our educational system is organized as part of the larger framework of society. Durkheim's theory of Social Order maintained that a central core of moral values, independent of individuals, was the binding framework for the subsystems within society. In that framework, education would transmit the dominant culture/value system, and act as an integrating force on the individual.

This country is a democracy, with a capitalist economy. As such, we may agree, that our society has a consensus of values reflected in the legal system; that laws are passed by a government voted into power by individuals in free elections. In theory, it follows, that individuals are empowered to bring about change in the controlling sub-systems within society, through public debate, individual or collective protest, or the electoral vote. Within this context, the primary or macro sociological function of education is that of social control.

Education generally acts as a stabilising force. It functions as a means of social reproduction, and simultaneously as a means of, or in relation to, social change. The selection of curricular content, the validation of educational attainment through certification, and occupational placement are all functional elements of education. It may be viewed as a balancing act. On the one hand a consensus value system and knowledge base is needed for continuity and stability; on the other hand our society is currently experiencing a post industrial revolution, and in responding to the latter, it is possible that education will be reduced to employment training. As a consequence knowledge acquisition may be levelled to the lowest common denominator, with the economy becoming the deciding factor in educational planning.

There is a highly complex and conflicting set of forces at play within the field of education. What is proposed is that a crisis arises where there is a mismatch between or within the philosophical aims, and sociological functions of the educational system, which may be created, heightened, or diffused by the political and economic context. Diagram A attempts to illustrate the relationship between political, economic, and educational elements. Because of the complexity of the subject the illustration is of necessity rather crude. Certain elements across these fields produce a 'match', resulting in 'extreme' models of society. It seems likely that a healthy society will contain some 'balanced' mismatch between elements. But crisis develops when several elements are in conflict. Diagram B

attempts to illustrate the current conflicting elements at play resulting in an ever deepening crisis in this country's educational system.

Three main crisis areas are identifiable: 1) General low standards of achievement in key areas of literacy, numeracy, and scientific knowledge. 2) Ongoing contention as to the nature and purpose of education. 3) Lack of intellectual prowess throughout the educational Establishment, illustrated by low calibre teacher recruitment, poor managerial structures in schools, and reactive/prescriptive policy decisions totally lacking in vision.

The Private and State sectors in education have historically created a dichotomy of access to knowledge. It is the *Guardian* notion of the 'great and the good' which was the basis for the ethos in Public schools. Along with their high status classical curriculum, organized games, and religious education, the Public Schools became a reference point for the development of the State Grammar schools. The 1944 Education Act purported to a system of education according to 'age, aptitude, and ability'. A three tier system developed: the Public Schools; the State Grammar Schools; Secondary Modern Schools and Technical Colleges.

These may be seen as providing for the Upper classes, middle classes, and working classes, respectively. The formation of the Welfare State and the economic boom years of the 1960s gave economic stability and the focal point for education was development of the individual rather than the needs of society. Comprehensive schooling was developed, which saw a merger between the Grammar and Secondary Modern schools. In the Primary sector, after publication of the Plowden Report in 1967, the progressive child-centred methodology flourished. A new egalitarianism was born, and education as a force for the development of equal opportunities was the central concern. This concern evolved out of the deprivation/difference debate, well documented by Bernstein, Davie, Britton, and Trudgill. The predominant notion was that schools were transmitting an alien culture, and failing to meet the needs of working class and ethnic minority children. However it would seem that a child-centred curriculum, using the child's own experience as a developmental base, is potentially completely at odds with the equal opportunities stance it purports to uphold. It would hold that a child with severely restricted experience outside school should have severely restricted experience inside school. It may be suggested that it is in this era that the seeds were sown for our current educational crises. The economic decline in the 1980s called for greater control of the Educational system in response to Society's needs as opposed to those of the individual. The Tories legislated for a National Curriculum which defined the knowledge base contained in the curriculum of State schools with the 1988 Education Act. But the National Curriculum may be seen as a reactive measure which has proved to be ineffective in dealing with the three educational crises identified previously in this essay. The Government Report *Standards and Quality in Education 1992-93* illustrated that 5 years after the implementation of the National Curriculum education was still failing some social groups; still failing to maximise talent, and failing to deliver the Science specialists needed in a post-industrial society. The Tories ignored the philosophical and intellectual crisis, and the current re-branded New Labour

Government appears to be making a similar error, with low standards of achievement still persisting. Their poorly conceived literacy/numeracy initiative is another reactive policy. Politicians are failing to grasp that they are simply tinkering with the symptoms of an outmoded system.

The crisis of underachievement may be linked with the ongoing contention as to the nature and purpose of education. The Tories appeared to have presumed that a National Curriculum, defining the knowledge base to be taught, would automatically result in ability streaming, and a subject based teacher-directed methodology in Primary schools. This would alleviate the clash between Primary and Secondary education (where lessons have been predominantly teacher directed and subject based). However, most Primary schools are still adhering to mixed-ability classes with a topic based approach to the curriculum. It would appear that there is a direct conflict between pedagogy and curriculum. A clash of ideologies, and the fact that a content based approach to teaching at Primary level is in direct opposition to the historically entrenched progressive ideal, which favours mixed ability grouping, cooperative learning, and an experiential base, is never acknowledged. The political and economic climate have been central to the planning and development of the National Curriculum. Centralized control of the curriculum is designed to maintain mainstream cultural transmission - and class divisions.

The dominance of economic 'market forces' in influencing educational policy implies that education must be justified in monetary terms. Limited Government funding may result in employers taking greater responsibility for vocational training.

By linking vocational training to market requirements it may be argued that the problem of 'overtraining' would be alleviated. Vocational training would respond directly to the economic climate: opportunities would be plentiful during an economic boom, but greatly reduced in a recession. This would indicate that the State Education system would serve to supply only the basic requirements for citizenship and employment placement. Further education for specialization would have to be self-financed, with the Government slowly withdrawing State funding via student grants. Employment training schemes financed by Industry would have their content dictated by Corporate needs. It would appear in this climate that individual choice of study is dictated by one's economic means.

The contentions in education are numerous. The Primary sector uses the Progressive Romantic philosophy as its point of reference, the Secondary sector uses the Traditional Classical; and now at Primary level there is contention between pedagogy and curriculum.

There are contentions between the need for stability and continuity in society and the need to respond to changes in the employment and economic structures in society. Society is in the midst of a post-industrial revolution, and consequently education cannot be reduced to simple elements of citizenship and employment training. Denying access to higher forms of knowledge by establishing it as a market commodity is fundamentally wrong. So is de-skilling children intellectually by failing to teach them the 'basics' required to enter the mainstream cultural frame (this de-skilling is the result of zealous applica-

tion of child-centred policies in the Primary sector).

There is the clash of political ideology between the Left and Right. The former favouring an educational system that is 'evolutionary' and aims for social change; the latter a system which maintains the status quo. Furthermore, we now have great political confusion with the development of New Labour. We now have a government with Right wing leadership sitting atop of a Left wing grassroots base. Rather like a re-branded soap powder, New Labour may prove to be full of froth but without much cleaning power. A confused philosophy will produce confused legislation, and there certainly has been a failure to address the tensions between the philosophical aims and sociological functions of education.

These issues cannot be resolved through Party politics which tends to respond in a reactive way to crises. Education would appear to have become a political football. Political whims and an ever-changing economic climate appear to be the baseline for policy. If this is so there will inevitably be a 'lag' be-

tween policy and practice - and a mismatch between education and the society it serves.

A new equation needs to be established with the philosophical aims and sociological functions of education clearly defined and balanced. Thorough intellectual debate is needed, independent of political ideology. Diagram A in this essay suggests the development of a new philosophical perspective, the Progressive Classical, which does not present the needs of the individual and society as mutually exclusive. Perhaps then a view of education truly serving the needs of the individual and society will emerge.

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ARMED MEN ON THE STREETS OF LONDON

Sean Gabb

Earlier this year I went with my wife to see *Titanic*. It was an impressive though much overrated film, not nearly so good as the older *A Night to Remember*, which in a number of scenes it appeared to copy. I disliked it for the melodramatic tear-jerking that interfered with the much larger story, and for the implied attack on England - all that wailing Irish music and the suppressed glee at showing how a shining glory of the Liverpool shipyards went to the bottom.

Even so, it contained an interesting portrayal of the Old Order as it existed just before the Great War. There was much that was harsh in that Order - the rigid separation of classes, for a start, and the emptiness of many of the lives at the top. But it was the choice fruits of the most wonderful and stable expansion of the productive forces that has ever happened. The people who sailed on the *Titanic* in April 1914, and who went down with her, were - regardless of their social station, and regardless of how many of them met their fate - free citizens of free countries. There were no passports to be carried and presented on demand, no intrusive body searches for prohibited vegetable substances, and no questions asked if passengers chose to carry firearms across national frontiers.

We were invited to feel sorry for the thousand or so people who went down with the *Titanic*. For myself, I would rather have died then than have lived to witness the avalanche of destruction of our free civilisation that began two years and two months later at Sarajevo, and that may, before its centenary, have carried away all the familiar landmarks of the England and America that existed in 1912.

That was the message I carried away with me as Mrs Gabb and I stepped out into Leicester Square and walked down to where we had parked on the Embankment. Any tears I might

have been inclined to shed for Leonardo di Caprio and Kate Winslett were entirely obscured by thoughts of that far more awesome catastrophe. And I was more sensitised than usual for what happened next.

At 11:45 pm, as we came to the junction of Charing Cross Road and Trafalgar Square - between the National Portrait Gallery and St Martin's Church - we noticed a Police car stopped behind another car. A black man had been stopped for something. It hardly matters what - black drivers are often stopped at night on the streets of London: sometimes for real crimes, sometimes for suspected infractions of laws that ought not to exist, sometimes simply because they are black. There was nothing unusual in this scene until we were walking past. Then I noticed that one of the Police officers was carrying a gun. It was buttoned into a holster on his hip.

He was not using it for any purpose. He just happened to have a firearm. Had I stayed to look more, I might have seen that the other officers were also armed.

I was shocked. Ever since the Trafalgar Square riot of 1886, the Police in this country have been unarmed. Certainly, guns are available for special purposes; and there are occasionally armed officers in places where Irish terrorist outrages are expected. But I had never before seen an armed officer involved in a casual stop and search of a driver.

There was plainly no call for the gun to be brandished - as I said, it was buttoned safely away in its holster. I wanted to stop and make a note of the Police car's registration number, but was unable. Though she said nothing, there was something about Mrs Gabb's manner that told me: "Keep moving. Don't get involved. This is nothing to do with you". Since she

grew up in a Communist police state, she knows exactly how to walk past on the other side when the authorities choose to be nasty to strangers. And she was probably right to keep in practice on that evening. Her love affair with England began five years ago with encomiums to British freedom, but has now matured into an escape into its history before 1914 and a growing interest in the United States - a country which is cursed with a militarised bureaucracy and a legal profession that has perverted the plain English of the Constitution into something that none of its drafters would have recognised, but which is still somewhat behind us in its progress to being a satrapy of the New World Order.

Of course, American Police officers are armed as a matter of routine, and my American readers may wonder what it is that has launched me on these melancholy reflections. The answer is that the British public has just been comprehensively disarmed. Any ordinary British citizen who is caught with so much as a Beretta.22 faces unlimited fines or up to ten years imprisonment, or both. There are calls in the media for even tighter controls than now on rifles and shotguns. And there is actually a Bill before Parliament to bring in a licensing scheme for airguns.

We are the most comprehensively disarmed people in the "free" world. Even the Red Chinese are better trusted by their rulers with guns than we now are. And Mrs Gabb regarded it as normal at her school in Czechoslovakia to be taken out of her lessons every now and again for some target practice with live ammunition.

But our rulers have given up not a single gun of their own. The Prime Minister remains so terrified of the people who elected him that he dares not visit his Constituency without 28 armed guards to protect him. The Police have taken to openly flaunting their firepower.

The authorities keep their guns for two reasons. The first is the obvious one. The hundreds of thousands of guns that have been handed in during the past few months had been almost entirely in the hands of law-abiding people. The number of licensed guns used for criminal purposes in this country has always been minuscule. Even the Hungerford and Dun-

blane massacres hardly raise the figures to statistical significance. But the guns that are the proper object of concern - those in criminal hands - have not been handed in. The number of armed crimes in this country has been rising smoothly since the 1960s. The progressive tightening of gun control since 1968 has done nothing to moderate this trend. Indeed, by disarming the prospective victims of crime, gun control has contributed to the trend.

The two Firearms Acts that followed Dunblane gave immense pleasure to creeps like Anne "Yes I do [want to live in a slave state]" Pearston and to all the special interests that used her as a battering ram against our liberties, but did nothing at all to make the streets any safer. Therefore the continued need for having armed Policemen on the streets.

The other reason is less obvious. It is probably not even fully understood by the authorities. But it seems to be that the proliferation of casually armed Police officers in the past few years is partly to tell us who are the masters and who are the slaves. They have the power, and we must obey. For the most part, naked force - or even its overt threat - is unnecessary. We have long since been broken in to the new order of things. Guns are displayed merely as a symbol - rather as top hats were worn on the first class decks of the Titanic not so much to protect the wearers from the wind and rain as to distinguish them from the other passengers.

Why do I stay in this decadent police state that England has become? Why not give in to my wife's prompting that a good teaching job is just waiting for me across the Atlantic, in a country where we can keep more of what we earn and live in a decent house and still have the freedom - even if diminishing - to keep and bear arms?

The answer is written on the pediment of the statue of Nurse Edith Cavell that overlooked that armed incident in London a few weeks ago: "Patriotism is Not Enough". I may go to America for holidays. I may go there to earn a little money. But I have a duty to the country that I still passionately love to keep my home here and to return to it and do what little I can to make it England again.

REVIEW OF MICHAEL LEVIN'S WHY RACE MATTERS

Professor Antony Flew

Praeger: Westport, CT, 1997, 415pp (hb) ISBN 0-275-95789-6 £47.55.

This is a very long awaited, formidably well evidenced and well argued book. The wait has been long mainly because it was so hard to find any US publisher prepared to handle such a work. A US publisher was needed because *Why Race Matters* is primarily about why race matters in the US. There, roughly 13% of the population is Negroid while, except for a tiny Mongoloid minority, the remaining 87% is Caucasoid. Al-

though there are lessons which we could and should draw from US experience, our problems of race relations are much less extensive and much more tractable.

The comprehensive academic study of what was then known as "the Negro problem" in the US can be conveniently dated as beginning with the hiring by the Carnegie Foundation of Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish social scientist with whom Hayek had later to share his Nobel Prize in Economics. Myrdal was to direct "a comprehensive study of the Negro in the

United States, to be undertaken in a wholly objective and dispassionate way as a social phenomenon". The resulting study, *An American Dilemma* was published in 1944 in two volumes of six hundred and fifty pages each. Its direct and indirect influence has been enormous.

The relevance of this lies in the fact that Myrdal and his team were — like so many professing social scientists then and later operating upon extreme environmentalist assumptions. They were, that is to say, perhaps without recognising that they were doing so, assuming that all observed differences between human sets are to be explained exclusively by reference to differences between the environments of members of those sets. (By Cantor's Axiom for sets, the sole essential feature of a set is that its members have at least one common characteristic.)

This unquestioned and unevidenced assumptions became so widespread that in 1965 the US Department of Labour on its own sheer authority and without any citation of supporting research pronounced the "Intelligence potential is distributed among Negro infants in the same proportion and pattern as among Icelanders or Chinese, or any other group There is absolutely no question of any genetic differential."

Levin's first task is to summarise the evidence showing that on average across certain different racially defined sets there are substantial differences not only in abilities but also in inclinations differences which must in the main be effects of physiological differences. (For a comprehensive account of the evidence for such differences, and for evolutionary theory to explain their origin, see Phillippe Rushton Race, Evolution and Behaviour, now available in paperback).

These differences between different racially defined sets are, of course, all differences only on average across these sets, and not differences between all the members of the one and all the members of the other. They therefore neither present any rational objection to selecting individual members of these different sets exclusively on the basis of their individual merits or demerits, nor any excuse for any refusals to do so. But, on the other hand, they do constitute a most substantial objection against policies based upon the contrary assumption - that there are no such differences.

In 1964 the US Congress finally and famously adopted Civil Rights Acts. These categorically and most clearly forbid all discrimination either in favour of or against anyone on the grounds of their membership of some particular racially defined set. At that time legally demanded racist discrimination was always against blacks, it was already confined to the Deep South, and was declining even there. Since the introduction of the Acts and in spite of, or perhaps in part and indirectly because of their introduction, officially mandated racist discrimination has in fact spread to every state in the Union.

This officially approved and demanded racist discrimination takes many forms. But is now always in favour of blacks and, consequently, against all others. The justifications offered by pretended enemies of racism for supporting such paradigmatically racist policies all ultimately depend on assumptions that there are no relevant differences in natural abilities or natural dispositions between relevant racially defined sets of blacks

and of not-blacks. It is only and precisely upon such assumptions that it can be argued, as it constantly is, that, if relative to their proportion of the relevant total population blacks are under represented in desirable or over-represented in undesirable areas, then this must, and can only be, due to white anti-black racism.

Whites are thus by their very whiteness made always and necessarily guilty of racism. The great importance and value of Levin's book is that, after redeploying the evidence establishing the falsity of this misguiding no-relevant-natural-differences assumption, he proceeds systematically to compare the actual results or lack of results of policies based upon that false assumption and to explore implications for policy of facing the true physiological and biological facts.

To savour the quality of this exceptionally rich and full book consider specimens. Typically Levin begins by asking why, if the fact that proportionately more US blacks than US not-blacks are accounted poor does not actually result from victimising by congenitally guilty whites, it should still be seen as a social problem about which something must be done (and that primarily by and at the expense of whites): "After all it is not a problem that owls live in trees while gophers dwell underground, except perhaps for an owl confined to a burrow." Again, Levin points out that "Objectively speaking, a black person born after 1965 has experienced, not oppression, but unparalleled privilege..." He goes on to calculate both that blacks receive 41.3% of the total tax funding of "Aid for families with Dependent Children, food stamps, housing and other subsidies for the poor what is colloquially called 'welfare'" and that the tax contribution of blacks is proportionately lower than that of non-blacks. He concludes: "The black rate of return for spending on public assistance is thus roughly ten times the white rate (a ration which increases when non-European Hispanics are excluded from the white population)."

Again Levin notes both that and how much, "despite a lower life expectancy and high infant mortality, black fertility is greater than white," and also that "Thirty-three percent of all black children (and their mothers) are now supported by the resources of genetically unrelated whites, in the form of public assistance, rather than by their biological parents." Levin comments: "black success at inducing whites to divert resources from their own children to the children of unrelated blacks is a successful exploitation of the environment rarely matched in nature."

The final chapter is a constructive afterwork entitled 'A Hypothetical Address by the President of the United States of America to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People'. This, which was presumably composed before the announcement of 'One America in the 21st Century: The President's Initiative on Race', says what Levin believes that a concerned, courageous and realistically guilt-free President ought to say. To no-one's surprise the Advisory Panel which the present President appointed to further that initiative swiftly made clear that it was not prepared to consider criticism of present policies of pro-black racist discrimination, though it did not, of course, describe those policies so honestly.

REVIEW OF LYNETTE BURROW'S *THE FIGHT FOR THE FAMILY*

Paul Anderton

Family Education Trust, 322, Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 7NS, ISBN 0-906-229-14-6.

The main aim of this book is to expose the fact that the 'Children's Rights' movement is actually only about 20 dedicated activists. They have formed various 'front' organizations - financed mainly by charitable trusts, particularly the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Rowntree Charitable Trust, and the taxpayer through some grants from government departments. The apparently different front organizations were in fact formed by various permutations of individuals from the basic 20.

This has given the media and the government the impression of much wider support than is justified by the actual number of people involved. In fact these pressure groups were mainly responsible for the Childrens Act 1989 which 'outlawed' corporal punishment - and in effect any physical contact - in state schools and other government-sponsored institutions such as childrens homes. Much of the evidence given for the provisions of the Childrens Act was very dubious or even completely bogus.

A rather chilling quotation of remarks made by Lord Mackay, the Lord Chancellor during the debate on the Act; "the days when a child should be regarded as a possession of his parent.....are now buried forever. The overwhelming purpose of parenthood is the responsibility of caring for, and raising the child to be a properly developed adult, both physically and morally."

The chief organizer of the campaign which started in 1979 was Peter Newell who in effect founded all the front organizations. Often involved were Penelope Leach, who is often featured in the media on Childrens rights issues, and Gerison Lansdown whom some members might remember as taking part in a debate on 13th October 1996, in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, with David Wedgwood. A complete list of organizations and personnel concerned with Childrens Rights and an analysis of their interconnections is given in the appendix.

As well as exposing the totally disproportionate effect of this very limited number of activists, there is also the strong suggestion of a homosexual and paedophile association with the possible extension of the sexual availability of children as the 'real' motive for the Childrens Rights movement. This may or may not be true. If it is then it seems a very roundabout way for only 20 people, about half of them female, to go about it. They would surely have had more personal success by simply finding available children directly. And if paedophiles are as numerous as current 'concern' about them suggests, then surely the support for Childrens Rights, including sexual 'freedom', would be more widespread?

The author may also have a hidden agenda. As a Roman Catholic she would presumably like to see the universal reestablishment of the traditional Christian, largely patriarchal, family. She would no doubt argue that her religion was no more relevant than the colour of her hair - she is just presenting 'the facts'. In which case presumably any sexual preferences of the Childrens Rights activists are also irrelevant to 'the facts'.

Nevertheless the most significant 'fact' is that children are financially and emotionally largely dependent on their parents and this alone surely gives parents special rights. The intrusion of the State on parental responsibility is most likely simply to encourage irresponsible parents - which then leads to demands for yet more state interference. This is surely the road to increasing social chaos - of which there is quite enough already. Whatever its faults there is still a lot to be said for the 'traditional' family - in particular its dependence on obligations as well as 'rights'.